

Bruce Trail Conservancy adds 232 acres to Conservation Corridor

More than 1,180 donors contributed \$800,000 to create three new nature reserves along the Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

Thanks to this collective effort, Silent Valley, Fairmount-Webwood Passage and Duntroon Crevice Heights are now all under the permanent protection of the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC), and funds are available to manage these and other lands and make them available to the public. The new nature reserves add 232 acres to the growing Bruce Trail Conservation Corridor.

In Ontario's increasingly urbanized landscape, BTC is working to ensure critical Niagara Escarpment landscape remains in its natural state for everyone to explore and enjoy in perpetuity. It's one of Ontario's largest Land Trusts, and its work in conserving and preserving Escarpment land is of growing importance.

The three new nature reserves safeguard many unique natural features and species. The cold-water stream on Fairmount-Webwood Passage near Meaford supports many species of trout and other fish. This nature reserve also provides habitat for the Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cape May Warbler and a resident pair of Sandhill Cranes. Duntroon Crevice Heights, south of Collingwood, offers an impressive display of ancient cedars clinging to islands of rock within a labyrinth of deep Escarpment crevices. At 200 acres, Silent Valley, located east of Owen Sound, is the largest of the new reserves. It has a rich pioneer history and is home to geological and biological diversity that calls for exploration.

The success of BTC's campaign to raise \$800,000 from its members and other supporters, without any government funding, is a testament to the value and importance people place on preserving the Niagara Escarpment's natural spaces and ensuring a permanent place for the Bruce Trail.

The campaign was launched in October with a \$200,000 gift from the Gosling Foundation. Dr. Philip Gosling, a founder of the Bruce Trail, has demonstrated a longstanding and committed effort to further the mission of the BTC. In early February, the Hamlin Family Foundation provided the final \$70,000 to fulfill the campaign's goal. The Hamlin Family Foundation donation was made in loving memory of Heather Hamlin, matriarch of the Hamlin clan. The family has been very involved in Scouting throughout their lives and the Bruce Trail has been central to their recreational pursuits. In addition to this gift, the Hamlin Family Foundation has contributed \$77,000 towards the BTC's 2014 Trail Development and Maintenance program. Brian Hamlin spoke about the Foundation's gift.

"The Hamlin Family Foundation believes strongly in the BTC land acquisition strategy for the protection of the Bruce Trail in perpetuity," he said. "This gift is also a testament to the confidence our Foundation has in the BTC as a philanthropic vehicle for conservancy."